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THIS WEEK

Week by Week 449

Government and Education

For Federal Aid
by Francis Griffith 453

Against Federal Aid
by Philip Burnham 456

Living on the Heights
by John Cogley 459

Christ and the Universe
by Dorothy Poulain 460

The Stage
by Richard Hayes 465

The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung 465

Of Note: Authentic Dialogue
by Marcel Deschoux 468

Communications 470

Books 473

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THE Commonweal

A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

—week by week—

MR. MIKOYAN'S VISIT

MR. ANASTAS I. MIKOYAN has come and gone. In a few short days he spoke with more people of importance and influence than any other recent visitor could possibly have gotten access to. He talked to the Wall Street brokers, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to industrialists and to some labor leaders, at a United Nations Press Conference and on a "Meet the Press" T.V. program. He visited several times with Mr. Dulles and spent almost two hours with President Eisenhower.

He examined large plants, merchandising stores and middle-class homes. With seemingly endless energy he went from one great city to another answering many questions and asking others, almost always genial, witty and responsive. He conveyed to many people an impressive appearance of a firm, competent, frank person. His press conferences were much more dramatic and, it must be admitted, more interesting than the President's.

The performance, undoubtedly, was masterly. He displayed at all times that assurance which he must have earned during those many years when he saw his friends and colleagues fall by the wayside—or get pushed over the brink—while he remained in the Soviet hierarchy. And his manner, his easy shift from light sallies to direct, informed responses, won applause almost every place he went. Now that he has returned to Russia, where he will soon participate in the Twenty-first Congress of the Communist Party, we are left with the most natural and imperative questions: what was the purpose of Mr. Mikoyan's visit and what, in fact, did he accomplish?

Mr. Mikoyan asserted several times that his true purpose was to check on his old impressions of the United States, to see what has happened in this country since he was here twenty-two years ago.

Like many of his answers, this was undoubtedly true—and highly incomplete.

IN HIS TALKS with the various groups in this country Mr. Mikoyan seemed at least as eager to offer lessons as he was to learn. And from the mutual exchanges between him and the industrialists and bankers, it seemed that some ideas were exchanged and some new attitudes formed. He said that he was pleased to hear from business leaders that they desired peace and he flattered them by saying that business leaders were frequently more acute than their political leaders.

In speaking of our foreign policy, particularly in regard to Germany, he insisted upon the apparent reasonableness of the Russian position and the lack of positive proposals from the West. He discussed the cold war as if it were fostered entirely by the West and as if the Soviet leaders were imbued only with the firm reasonableness he himself claimed to exemplify.

He accomplished in large part exactly what he intended; for he evidently appeared to many Americans as a person of intelligence, frankness and good will, the kind of person one would like to see as the representative of one's own country.

This at least was the strong initial impression. But surely the surprise at seeing Mr. Mikoyan warmly embraced by Eastern bankers must wear off and more sober second thoughts gain force. We have little reason to trust the Soviets except where an agreement continues to work in their favor. Mr. Mikoyan himself has said it: "... theory will have to be verified on the basis of practice, facts and life." And other countries than America have found that Mr. Mikoyan can smile, and smile and smile—and produce no helpful shift in international relations.

And, as the warm welcome which Americans easily extend to foreign visitors fades, Mr. Mikoyan's unsatisfactory and elusive responses will remain to be analyzed. For even a person as sharp and as genial as Mr. Mikoyan cannot escape the consequences of the open confrontation of Russian Communism and Western democracy. Mr. Mikoyan dismissed too lightly the censoring of news in Russia, including some of the statements he has made in this country, the suppression of Mr. Khrushchev's "cult of personality" speech, and the denunciation of Pasternak.

Although he charmed some businessmen by his light comments about trade agreements, he was either dishonest or misinformed about the conditions of the agreements. Since he specializes in foreign and domestic trade, it is difficult to think that he is not informed.

There are many such points that should and undoubtedly will be raised by critics of Mr. Mikoyan. But maybe one incident will illustrate better than detailed criticism the gap that exists between our system and the Soviets'. When asked whether he noticed that the right to dissent was cherished and protected in this country and whether he was impressed by this, he replied: "It did produce an impression, but not the kind you thought. I do not think picketing is a great achievement of the American way of life. I think our system is a more acceptable one. . . . But I realize that ninety-nine per cent of Americans have nothing to do with that sort of thing . . . the more quickly the Americans get rid of these freedoms, freedom for hooligans, for people who violate law and order, the better for yourselves, I think."

When a man can so completely miss the importance of picketing in this country—one reason, possibly, why he had some difficulty with labor leaders—and so readily juggle terms such as hoodlums, freedom, law and order, he cannot grasp the essentials of democracy. This is the greatest lesson of Mr. Mikoyan's visit.

THE LIBERAL EFFORT

AT THE OPENING of the new Congress, liberals in both the Democratic and Republican Parties challenged their more conservative leaders. Neither group can be said to have won its battle, but it does seem to us that the Republican liberals emerged from the fracas in better shape than their Democratic counterparts.

We advance this opinion rather tentatively,

simply because the evidence is far from conclusive. In the House, G.O.P. members did unseat Congressman Joseph Martin as Republican Leader, but this clearly seems to have been a victory of youth and aggressiveness over age and adjustment; no one suggests that Congressman Halleck, the new G.O.P. leader, is any closer to "modern Republicanism" than his unseated rival. And there are indications that some Eisenhower Republicans in the House are being badly treated in the matter of committee assignments.

In the Senate, however, the Eisenhower Republicans seem to have come out ahead, even while losing their main engagement. The liberal G.O.P. Senators failed in their efforts to elect John Sherman Cooper rather than the conservative Everett McKinley Dirksen as their Senate leader and spokesman. But they put up a good fight which forcibly impressed their position on the general public, on the Party's Congressional leadership, and on President Eisenhower. Even though they lost in the final voting, their efforts are bound to win more consideration for their views in the future.

Furthermore, the Republican insurgents in the Senate will now benefit from the application of the "Johnson Rule" on committee assignments, a change which will give every Senator one good assignment before any Senator can have two. This was part of what the G.O.P. rebels were fighting for, and it should mean that Eisenhower Republicans in the Senate will no longer disappear from the public view in the long periods between election campaigns.

As far as the Democrats are concerned, if any serious revolt materialized against the powers-that-be in the House, it escaped general notice. For a while, it is true, there was talk of a revolt on the composition of that traditionally obstructionist roadblock, the House Rules Committee, but Mr. Sam Rayburn swiftly let it be known that he liked things the way they were. After that, no more was said, at least in public.

In the Senate, there should by this time be no doubt that Senator Lyndon Johnson is calling the tune—and writing the words as well. As a result of his tactics during the battle over the filibuster certain facts are painfully clear.

On this major issue, Senator Johnson trounced the Republican and Democratic liberal coalition. Secondly, he made it quite clear that he will use his prerogatives as Majority Leader to get his way on key issues—how else explain the committee assignments given to some who opposed him on the filibuster? Thirdly, his "compromise" on the filibuster

is so much a paper gesture that even Senator Russell, the spokesman for the South, now admits that it represents little actual change. And, lastly, Senator Johnson has given the country at large a convincing glimpse of the split inside the Democratic Party which may well lead to a serious internal battle in 1960.

For these reasons, then, we are inclined to think the G.O.P. liberals benefited more by their efforts in recent weeks than their Democratic counterparts did. There will be many who disagree with this conclusion, and we grant that the accomplishments in either case were not overwhelming. But the difference is there, nonetheless, and elections have been won or lost on less substantial differences.

DEMOCRACY IN KOREA

THE RECENT troubles in Korea—where President Syngman Rhee's majority party in the National Assembly has rammed through a harsh "security" law and a bill to abolish all elected local governments—point up a continuing paradox and danger in United States foreign policy. All too often, in almost every part of the world, the urgency of the Communist threat has prompted U.S. policy-makers to support whatever government promised to be most firmly anti-Communist, whatever else it was, and most "dependable," whatever the internal situation.

Using such criteria, our State Department has found it advisable, in recent years, to support a great many political "strong men," thereby incurring bitter criticism and complaint from harried dissenters to such authoritarian regimes and, throughout the world but especially in the lands struggling to achieve free self-government, the damning charge of cynicism and hypocrisy. Our policy-makers are, of course, not unaware of these reactions. But they judge our moral vulnerability and propaganda defeats as necessary evils in the attainment of a more crucial objective—immediate security against the Communist threat. And it is the "stable," tightly organized government which seems to offer the best chance for this security.

It would be foolish to pretend that this dilemma is easily solved, that the wisest course in our relations with undemocratic or not-so-democratic states can be determined by the application of any simple moralistic formula. But it does seem that we have too often given our support to the governments of various turbulent states on the basis of extremely shortsighted judgments. Time after time we have

paid a high price—in moral prestige and propaganda position—for "stability" and "anti-Communism" which turned out to be non-existent.

Now it is the Republic of Korea which is in the spotlight and our ally Syngman Rhee who is embarrassing us, throughout Asia and throughout the world, by his attempt to suspend almost all democratic rights and to bring all government, down to the village level, under central control. It may be that some such steps are necessary to combat the danger of Communist infiltration. It may be that the effects of the controversial laws are being exaggerated by groups hostile to Dr. Rhee's party. But in any case, the phrasing of the new legislation and the extraordinary manner in which it was passed into law are profoundly disquieting. The neutralist nations of Asia and Africa are openly skeptical of President Rhee's good faith, and once again they are casting the United States as the friend of dictators, as the enemy of democracy and freedom.

The situation in Korea demands a hard re-examination, and if Syngman Rhee is amenable to our persuasion (not interference), as he very likely is, we should make known to him the depth of our convictions about democracy. There is little stability or security or protection against the Communist tide in a government which has not the full consent of the people.

BY TRAIN OR CAR?

IT IS PARADOXICAL that the curtailing and threatening of commuter services should coincide with unparalleled expansion of our suburbs. One would think that the wholesale flight of residents from the American city would mean more trains and ferries and stations. Yet suburban rail facilities are in a sharp decline. To get from surrounding areas to one's job in the city is increasingly difficult and costly.

Responsible public officials are beginning to come forward, but thus far loud protests have been voiced by directly interested groups. Various small committees of commuters, raising their voices in poorly organized fashion, have often met defeat. The railroads themselves, buttressed last year by a Federal Transportation Act, have encountered little real opposition to closing out especially unprofitable facilities. But a number of them are far from satisfied—at least here in the East. The railway unions, which estimate that a hundred seventy thousand jobs have been lost through curtailed facilities in the past eighteen months, are getting up steam.

The greatest hope that something substantial will be done appears to lie with city fathers and interested regional officials. As trains and rail lines are discontinued, commuters are forced to take to buses or their own cars. Traffic to and from the city at the daily rush hours becomes unbearably congested; downtown areas function as bottlenecks which no amount of new arterial or feeder highways can alleviate. Since cars get wider, longer and more numerous each year, congestion steadily increases, while the pressure on city parking facilities grows acute. The maintenance of adequate suburban train service becomes of paramount concern to the city itself.

That is why something will probably be done. Doubtless the remedies will vary from city to city. In some cases there may even be subsidies for suburban lines—at the very least a measure of tax relief for local rights of way and terminal facilities. A number of cities may move to incorporate suburban trains into their municipal transportation systems. In other cases semi-public bodies similar to the Port of New York Authority will be set up. The survival of this important means of access between city and suburbs is of general public concern.

RIOTS IN THE CONGO

IN RECENT YEARS the Belgians have won commendation for many of the policies in their productive Congo colony. What they have done to bring education, better health, more adequate shelter and a measure of prosperity to this well-endowed, large region is undeniable. A hundred thousand industrious Belgians have been working harmoniously with and among thirteen million native Congolese. Now unemployment aggravated by the American recession has combined with the upsurge of African nationalism to produce a state of rebellion that throws Belgian enterprise and Belgian residence there into jeopardy. For some observers the handwriting is already on the wall.

Belgium may still be able to salvage much. If King Baudouin agrees not only to eventual independence but to a date that does not strike the Congolese nationalists as too distant, it may be possible to preserve economic relationships essential for the development of the Congo and for the Belgian economy as well. But if independence comes too soon, an inexperienced Congo nation will be faced by new difficulties, many of which stem from tribal separatism and the arbitrary non-ethnic boundaries established by the European

powers. More than anything else the Leopoldville riots indicate that the surge of African nationalism is so strong that even the tightly governed Portuguese colonies will not be able to hold back the tide indefinitely.

QUIET, PLEASE

THE PRESIDENT of the Student Council of the University of Detroit has finally done it—put silence on a paying basis. A dime in the juke box in the Student Union will buy “Three Minutes of Silence” for anyone who is tired of music and is willing to pay for an interlude of quiet. The idea is reported to be catching on, and the student pioneer is already working on a further refinement—a record which will provide the same amount of silence but which will also give out with a quiet “beep” every fifteen seconds, so people will know that the quiet they are enjoying is bought and paid for.

This development is obviously the kind of thing which could transform a culture overnight, and we here at The Commonweal do not intend to be caught napping. As soon as we read about the breakthrough at Detroit we started working on plans to adapt the idea for our own needs, and we are happy to report that we have already made considerable headway.

Our first project is obvious—finding a way to produce copies of The Commonweal with selected blank spaces for readers who object to certain parts of our editorial policy. Once this is done, those who do not like our stand on civil liberties, say, or on Church-State questions, will be able—for a small fee, of course—to get copies of the magazine minus any mention of the offending subject.

This, though, is only the first of the possibilities we see. For thirty-five years The Commonweal has been demonstrating that those who hate our views vastly outnumber the faithful readers who like the magazine, and this fact has inevitably caused us chronic financial embarrassment. On the planning-boards, then, is our long-range solution to the magazine's financial problem: copies of The Commonweal with completely blank pages for those who do not take exception to this or that policy but simply hate the whole thing—specially prepared for non-readers, of course, by union non-printers. If past circulation experience is any guide, we expect a brisk demand for these special copies, especially as Christmas gifts.

For Federal Aid

by FRANCIS GRIFFITH

AT LONG LAST the federal government has recognized the need of aid to common education. In its dying days the eighty-fifth Congress passed the Hill-Elliott bill. Among other things, this bill provides loans to students at low interest rates with the stipulation that half the amount of each loan will be remitted to those who enter teaching after graduation and continue for five years. The bill also creates fellowships, sets aside funds for training foreign language teachers and guidance counselors, establishes grants to public and private schools for the purchase of science equipment. Further, it earmarks eighteen million dollars for research and experimentation in educational television and other audio-visual aids, and increases the government's contribution to vocational education in skilled trades necessary for defense.

The bill is designed to spur scientific, technical, and teacher education, but it applies to other fields as well. The estimated cost of the legislation over a four-year period is nine hundred million dollars. By enacting the measure, Congress has taken a long step towards equalizing educational opportunity throughout the nation.

The bill is long overdue. It is the climax of legislation which began shortly after the Civil War and gained momentum with the disclosure of the 1870 census that more than half the population of the South was illiterate. For three quarters of a century the topic has been debated in Congressional committees, on the floors of the Senate and the House of Representatives, in articles, books, and over radio and television. The discussion will continue, for the Hill-Elliott bill is bound to let loose another spate of controversy.

Theoretically, education is not a function of the federal government. The Constitution does not refer to it. Under the Tenth Amendment, which reserves to the states all powers not specifically delegated to the central authority, education became a state function. In practice, however, the federal government has been involved in the education of youth since 1785, when the Articles of Confederation set aside land for public schools in every township of the thirteen original states. From 1802 to 1912 twenty-nine states received

unconditional grants from Congress in the form of land for the establishment of common schools.

Since the time of the first world war, Washington has subsidized vocational education in every state of the union. The federal government finances the education of Indian children, conducts training schools for disabled veterans, and reimburses local districts for the education of children who reside in neighboring military posts. It contributes almost a million dollars annually to Howard University and schools in the District of Columbia. It established the N.Y.A. to help needy students during the depression era. The W.P.A. built more than six thousand schools, improved more than five times that number, and conducted free adult education courses which in one year alone attracted about two million persons. Most famous of all federal aid programs in education was the G.I. bill which provided liberal subsistence allowances and tuition costs to servicemen. Today the federal government sponsors about two hundred educational programs.

Congress has enacted one hundred sixty aid-to-education measures since 1785, but the Hill-Elliott bill is the first to aid general education from the elementary through the post-graduate level. And by so doing, it establishes the principle of federal responsibility for education.

The weakness of the bill is that it does not go far enough. It is a temporary expedient, expiring after four years. It does not assist states and communities to raise teachers' salaries to a subsistence level; it does not provide funds for school construction. It is more a response to sputnik than to the fundamental national need. Further aid to education is essential and inevitable.

THE CENTRAL argument for federal aid to education is the necessity of equalizing educational programs among the states. There must be a desirable level of educational opportunity throughout the country if all citizens are to understand and participate intelligently in the solution of problems affecting the general welfare. Public education is one of the means by which a democratic government provides for its preservation and progressive betterment. If millions are denied adequate schooling because they reside in low-income

Mr. Griffith, now principal of Richmond Hill High School, has served as teacher and administrator in the New York public school system.

areas, the welfare of the entire country is adversely affected.

There are gaping disparities among states in wealth and tax-paying ability. Some are too impoverished to provide adequate financial support for their schools. Consequently, millions of children fail to obtain an education appropriate to their individual development.

While the wealthiest state in the union expends about four hundred dollars annually per capita on education, the poorest state can afford to expend only one-third that amount. Such a low expenditure means miserably paid, inadequately trained teachers, school terms averaging a month less than those in wealthier areas, a lack of texts, supplies, and equipment, and a dearth of health and guidance services.

There are at least eleven states which do not have the economic resources to provide a satisfactory standard of education: Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Georgia, Tennessee, West Virginia, and North Dakota. In these states the per capita income per child in 1952 ranged from \$2,810 in Mississippi to \$4,393 in North Dakota, as compared with the national average of \$6,727.

The poorest states are struggling to provide good educational opportunities, but because of their meager resources they cannot approximate the national average expenditure per child. Disparities in economic status are intensified by the fact that the low-income states have relatively more children and already spend a somewhat greater percentage of their wealth on education than do the more prosperous states.

Teachers' salaries in the low-income states are well below the national average for the school year 1957-1958. Eighteen states pay their teachers between \$3,225 and \$3,975, a scale which explains why qualified candidates shun the teaching profession. Teachers' salaries in Mississippi average \$2,650 or forty-three per cent below the national average. Salaries in Arkansas and North Dakota are only slightly higher. The attempt to justify below-average salary scales on the ground that the cost of living is lower in certain localities is not supported by Bureau of Labor statistics. If living costs seem to be lower in some parts of the country, it is because the standard of living is lower. Teachers who get below-average salaries must live according to a below-average standard.

ADMITTEDLY there is no reason why teachers' salaries should be the same throughout the country. Differences in salary scales are to be expected as much as differences in mores and laws. The crux of the problem is that the range of teachers' salaries between the lowest and highest levels is far too large. The difference between the salary scales offered by the most prosperous states and those offered by the poorest has been narrowed in recent years, but the gap is still vast.

The problem of teacher shortage is bound up with salary scales. In 1956 the teacher shortage was 120,700; a year later it was 135,000. In recent months it has somewhat diminished. Attracted by higher salaries, more and more college graduates are entering the profession, and more and more persons who had entered other professions are leaving them to become teachers. If the trend towards better salaries and working conditions continues, there may actually be a surplus of teachers in some localities in the years ahead. But the present shortage is bound to grow worse in states which are unable to raise teachers' salaries to desirable levels. States which cannot afford to parallel the wage scales of other sections of the country will continue to be plagued with uncovered classes and provisional personnel.

There is also a critical shortage of school buildings. One of the chief causes of this shortage is the increased birthrate of the postwar years. Another is the lag in school construction owing to depression and war. Minor causes include the normal depreciation of school plants, migration from impoverished areas, and the introduction of modern educational programs which require smaller classes and many specialized rooms and shops.

The extent of the classroom shortage has undoubtedly been magnified. The current crisis is not so great as was predicted a few years ago but it is still serious. An unprecedented building program has cut the classroom shortage more than half in the past four years; yet, conservatively estimated, at least forty thousand new classrooms and twenty thousand replacements are needed each year for the next decade. While most states are constructing schools at a commendable pace, some will have to speed up their construction programs materially to meet their needs. It is noteworthy that nearly all of the states which are lagging in school construction rank below the national median in per capita income.

Most states assist local school districts which are too poor to support good schools. They equalize educational opportunity by grants of aid so that all children within their borders may enjoy the same advantages. The federal government must equalize educational opportunity in the same way. It must grant assistance to insure equality of educational opportunity among all the states.

THE MOBILITY of our population makes federal aid urgent. America is on the move. Migrants trek from low-income to high-income states, and between 1940 and 1950, 4,500,000 persons migrated to the highest-income states, most of them coming from the lowest-income states. Relatively wealthy states suffer from this influx of persons from areas with low educational standards. The need for additional school build-

ings, personnel, and equipment imposes a sudden and abnormal tax burden which can be alleviated only by federal aid.

What will the cost of education be like ten or twelve years from now? It is certain to increase prodigiously. In a carefully documented and clearly reasoned study entitled *School Needs in the Decade Ahead*, Roger A. Freeman, who is no advocate of federal aid, estimates that the cost of public education in 1970 will be at least twice what it is today if present trends in school expenditures continue. The cost of educating a child in the public schools has doubled every twenty years since the turn of the century.

The primary cause of this explosive rise in costs is the changed nature of the educational program. Modern schools provide for individual differences instead of insisting on lockstep progress. Individualized instruction requires smaller classes, skilled teachers (and more of them), the assistance of guidance counselors and psychologists, and, on the secondary level, many specialized courses. These factors, plus the soaring cost of constructing school buildings and the non-educational responsibilities forced on the schools by negligent or demanding parents, make the cost of education increasingly expensive and place an undue financial strain on certain sections of the country.

If costs increase two-fold, those states which are already struggling to maintain their inadequate school systems will become more deeply mired in inefficient and backward educational programs. State governments will be able to double their contributions to education only by boosting property taxes by about two-thirds or by hiking sales taxes by three per cent. The only other way that elementary and secondary education can be maintained at the present level is by federal subsidy.

THE UNITED STATES is the only country in the world in which education is not under central control, where each state is responsible for maintaining its own schools. State legislatures generally set only minimum requirements and permit maximum freedom to local school districts to develop their own programs on the assumption that the citizens of a district are better acquainted with local needs and better able to handle their affairs than a far-away authority.

This assumption may be a myth but it is so strongly ingrained in our culture that it cannot be swept aside. Yet the arguments in favor of local control are more sentimental than realistic. Control at the grass-roots level is not necessarily more democratic than national control. Local school boards are often inefficient and swayed by non-educational considerations, and state departments of education are often provincial in their outlook. But regardless of the deficiencies of local autonomy, this country is committed to the policy that

each state is sovereign in education and that encroachment on this sovereignty is unwise.

Sate sovereignty is, of course, limited by the Bill of Rights as interpreted by the Supreme Court and by the laws under which Congress has helped education since 1785. The Court has limited state control of education by its decisions on the right of Negroes to attend "white" schools and on the right of parents to send their children to non-tax-supported schools, as well as by a number of other decisions. The limitations imposed by the legal requirements for obtaining aid for such special purposes as vocational education are liberal and involve only a necessary minimum of federal control. All the states now receive millions of dollars of federal aid, and yet none complains of restrictive requirements.

There is no reason to assume that Congress will abandon its traditional hands-off-education policy if it extends federal assistance. The conviction that control of education should remain close to the people is so strong that Washington would never arrogate to itself the authority now vested in the states. Moreover, Congress has shown that it does not want to control education. The recent Alaska statehood bill, for example, contained a provision against federal intervention in Alaska's school system. When full federal aid comes, as it surely will, Congress will undoubtedly acknowledge once more that education is a state function by providing for the preservation of local autonomy within the framework of broad national policies.

State equalization programs have not trespassed upon the powers of local school districts. They have not unduly impeded local determination of policies and budgets. Federal aid to education should involve no more infringement of states' rights than state aid to school districts has involved infringement of local rights.

There is nothing contradictory in extending federal assistance and retaining state and local responsibility for education. The Supreme Court has already ruled that grants-in-aid cannot be used to usurp powers not delegated to the government by the Constitution. The long history of federal aid proves that financial support need not materially impair local control.

Federal aid is prudential and humanitarian. America cannot afford the low level of education which is the best that some states can offer. The preservation of our civil liberty and economic well-being depends on a high national standard of education, and a high national standard requires federal assistance to many, if not all, states. Past experience shows that Congress can provide aid on a national scale without infringing upon states' rights. Federal aid is imperative because every child is entitled to the kind of education which will develop his abilities to the utmost and enrich his life, insure his liberty, and promote his happiness.

Against Federal Aid

by PHILIP BURNHAM

EVERY STATE in the Union has sufficient wealth among its citizens to support any form of schools its people genuinely desire. This fact has been brought out repeatedly, if somewhat surreptitiously, in the formal studies and debates which have accompanied the hard drive for federal school funds during the past two years. Financially, it is a question of the allotment of resources and the means and channels for getting and spending the suitable sums.

The Commerce Department regularly publishes a census of "Personal Consumption Expenditures." Americans spent \$13,844,000,000 for "Recreation and Amusement" in the single year of 1955. That astronomical sum does not include the money spent for things like cigarettes, cosmetics and liquor. "User-operated Transportation," or, roughly, private cars, accounted for additional expenditures of \$27,027,000,000 during the year—twenty-seven billion twenty-seven million: a liberal sum for any school system, even reduced to the hypothetical minimum of most casual joy riding. The money is undoubtedly there, in New York or in Mississippi, and the brutal question is how the people want to spend it. That is not a proper question for the National Government, or the National Education Association, to answer and settle with one central, over-riding formula.

In some places the people may prefer a permanent wave to a first grade teacher, or a T.V. set to a high school. They may favor advertising slogans to logarithmic tables and classical texts. That might be unfortunate, but it is not an evil which Congress is established to cure. Perhaps sections of New England would prefer a politely poor but bracingly erudite environment, while various areas Down South or Out West would enjoy better furniture and more relaxed cerebration. It would be difficult to determine centrally just where such a choice became criminal. Some communities might look over their educational systems conscientiously and intelligently and still decide that what they want is not a series of public school structures of the type and expense recommended by lobbyists who persuade or terrify a current majority of the

National Legislature. They may differ on the proportions of science and literature, of athletics and fine arts, of practical training and theoretic background which they think their schools should try to provide.

Equally intelligent and virtuous communities may differ about the whole pattern of education which they wish to foster. They may well favor different degrees of support for public schools and private schools, libraries and museums, kindergartens and universities. They may rely in different measure upon schools and churches, private homes and public institutions, on apprenticeships and trade schools, on parks and school yards: on different ways and means, in short, out of dozens and hundreds which produce education.

THIS YEAR the federal aid for education campaign has two special slogans: Sputnik and Recession. Those who want federal education will find some drama every year, of course, to use as a bomb to shake up Congress and the public. The very use of these external arguments to mold our schools ought to alarm citizens who consider education, or the individual, important. Education—inescapably, by definition—deals with the formation and integrity of the individual person. Education should not be, hardly more than the individual person, tampered with and utilized to effect current economic programs. When education is treated as a gear or lever in the massive machine turning out the Gross National Product, it will already have failed too miserably to worry about.

Sputnik, no one can deny, is a genuine embarrassment for the United States of America. It is certainly salutary to realize that the schools of other countries, and even the most alien, enemy country, can produce practical scientists and technicians capable of astonishing modern achievements. The great embarrassment sputnik shot into our field of education is the revelation of our parochial complacency and vain presumption. There was no good reason to assume that anything the rest of the world can do we can do better; and whatever policy and peace of mind were based upon such a boast deserved to be exploded. The Russians most cheerfully performed the negative task of blowing up a strong inclination to complacency. From there on, the

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job is ours. They did not prove American education to be inferior to theirs. Viewed strictly, they showed us simply that they, also, were capable of putting a satellite in orbit, and that we, in the event, reacted frantically to that fact. The most certain indication is not a lack of scientific accomplishment, but rather a failure to develop realism and humility with firmness and tranquility of spirit. These qualities Congress cannot give the community by legislation.

If it is constitutionally determined that the Defense Forces need technicians and scientists, then they have to enlist or draft them into their service. It is a horrible circumstance if the Defense Forces demand more than they can get, and determine to take persons and train them up from youth for their scientific war purposes. The Turks had their corps of Janissaries, a terror and scandal to Christians which brought on centuries of retribution. Furthermore, the scientific needs of defense constitute no valid argument for national education or federal aid to schools, beyond the customary in-service training in military schools and the ordinary paid attendance at autonomous civilian schools.

Last year the big drive was for laws and appropriations to give federal aid for state school buildings, exclusively. The claim or hope that federal law and money could be directed to the state public school systems without bringing more and more effective federal control appears to be a pure and palpable vanity. Among multitudes, our own American statesmen and scholars from the time of the founding fathers have taught and demonstrated that the government which raises the taxes and pays the bills will surely set the conditions. We are supposed to learn in the nursery that the man who pays the piper calls the tune.

The trouble cannot be that many of us do not see the centralized national control which would come with enough "federal aid." It appears, rather, that some Americans actively want to have a form of national education, and others are willing, all in all, to take a chance on it for certain purposes of their own, while perhaps hoping, many of them, that it would not overbalance the power of the states and local communities to our serious injury. This latter hope must seem only self-deception during a period when centralization heaps up giant powers in every field of interest and endeavor, and when the local and the personal are everywhere in jeopardy from the mechanical, engineered mass.

RECENT SESSIONS of Congress demonstrated bitter results of federal aid to education even before it is well launched. (Of course, the national government has long since entered the domain of the schools, one way and another. We are not facing a new beginning, but a sudden, perilous acceleration.) Political analysts, especially the more liberal who tend

strongest toward state centralism, say that passage of the school building bill was hampered by the race integration controversy. We can hope that Congress had more and better reasons to block the legislation, but the integration fight was undoubtedly an important cause. This made it still clearer that in the process of approaching an outright aid bill, fundamental difficulties for the Federal Government are inescapable.

First, an appropriation for education, even though designed to be as "clean" as possible from interference in the school systems, does inevitably involve an important degree of governmental bossing. There is no way, for instance, to avoid either permitting or prohibiting segregation. The indicated top-center way to handle the situation was demonstrated by the 101st Airborne Infantry in Little Rock. Education is a broad, deep field, and other extreme issues are bound to be turned up which the Federal Government would have equal trouble avoiding. Second, in order to bring federal law and action, an agreement covering the whole wide and various nation has to be achieved. That is really difficult; it's hard enough in one forty-ninth of the Union. Furthermore, a majority decision for the entire country is bound to leave a mighty minority, united from coast to coast at least in dissent.

Most painfully, also, it forces upon the United States Government a subject of debate and division which will heavily burden Congress and the other two Branches. A decent unity and peace and efficiency in Washington is made much harder to obtain, even with good will—and in the cold war period of history we can count on the difficulties of bad will as well. The temptation to make use of a dictatorial steamroller to conclude debates will dangerously grow. Because education cuts so close to the inner integrity of the citizen, there will be a growing temptation, also, for him to renounce love and interior commitment to a government if it overrides his educational loyalties.

The entire propaganda for federal help in school building, specifically, is unconvincing when viewed in a context of any breadth. In the process of education the material building rightly holds a very low priority position. As a place to learn, notable success has been achieved at the other end of a log, under a hedge, on the floor of a backwoods cabin. The provision of good courses and books and teachers is a task so much more important than providing so many cubic feet of structure per pupil that the architectural problem almost disappears. This year the propaganda is ranging far ahead of last year's carefully inhibited concentration on the buildings. This year the cry is to push science and go to the moon. Thus, more formative, philosophic considerations and objectives already show how totally the national government would quickly enter the heart of education if the people and Congress carelessly set it in motion.

IN ARGUMENTS for federal school aid much use has been made of the phrase, "equality of opportunity." This is one of the most lightly floating phrases in the whole sea of rhetoric. Usually it appears to mean the conformity of other people to a common denominator which the rulers or would-be rulers find it convenient to establish in their imagination. We should certainly work and pray that each person may have an equal opportunity to lead a good life in accord with his general humanity and particular abilities. A powerful human and theological argument could be made that such equality is inevitable through the nature of man and the Grace of God, despite any society, law or government. Still, a society has some right and duty to seek a distinguishable form or civilized pattern of good life for its members. That seems true, but it has never been settled that the state, and particularly the temporary majority or group controlling the government, constitutes the proper authority to select the cultural ideal of a people. Indeed, the matter is obviously far too subtle to be handled in these terms. It is impossible to "select" and enforce a culture: you can't order a man or a community to be civilized. That depends on free will, spiritual vision, and the laborious discipline of many generations.

Schools cannot "make up for" all the other failures of a society. Yet this is not to say that we cannot improve our personal and social life through education, but that education is a broad, complex and subtle movement which cannot be equated with the amenities of the local public school. Much of the sentiment for federal aid to education seems a sentimental effort at reparation by citizens sensitive enough to realize some of the inadequacies of our culture, but still unwilling to face those inadequacies on their proper ground. Federal aid to schools would thus tempt the sentimental unjustifiably to purge their sense of guilt and to hide away unhappy problems in a magical institution removed from the sight of the final sovereign power—the personal conscience.

In any case, one continental pattern of school and culture, from kindergarten up, for the entire United States and all the inhabitants therein is a bleak, gray specter. Communities, and certainly States, should have the right, and should be encouraged, to develop their own qualities and flavors, their own wide ranging variations on more embracing, looser, and longer running civilized forms. Within the varying local patterns, a very wide choice of individual good lives should be open to individuals. Not the same part for every man. Everybody doesn't need every opportunity for every occupation and career. It would be a sad perversion of "equality of opportunity" to give everyone, and force everyone to accept, the same stamp of education. More ought to be made of equality of opportunity for families, local communities, regions,

minorities to develop educational systems according to their own mind and heart, purpose and potentiality.

FEDERAL FUNDS for school buildings and federal aid to education mean practically, at the present stage, supervised assistance to state public school systems. The public school systems of the States embrace splendid people, noble efforts, and accumulated cultural capital of civilization. But embedded in them are also found a considerable number of the outrageous aspects of our life which are to be fought, and not to be encouraged, either in the schools or out in the wide wide world. The post-sputnik view of our schools is very deflationary. In fact, the public schools are currently viewed so dimly that, although politics teaches "the time to kick a man is when he's down," such care-free exercise can be dispensed with here.

But it has to be noted that one of the major faults of our schools is a smothering conformism. It bears down with heavy weight on the public school systems, from the largest and most secure to the most remote and geographically different. It exerts tremendous pressures upon non-public schools, from some local parochial grade school to the Ivy League. The enormous mass and prestige and economic displacement of the increasingly integrated state school systems constitute an almost overpowering gravitational force. Non-conformity demands of educators outside the main line ever increasing intellectual confidence, clarity and courage until Medal of Honor heroism is actually demanded. As the wave rolls over non-conforming schools and educators it threatens to submerge finally the families and students who still struggle to support and develop the remaining education which stays independent, or quasi-independent of the centralizing state systems.

We hardly need at this point new federal law, appropriations and administration to push continental standardization. An opposite drive is needed: to encourage the states and communities and individual schools to develop their own educational efforts according to the best and most creative ideas and techniques they can diversely develop, and according to the genius of their own regional setting and special human heritage. The creative forces of education outside the interconnected labyrinth of the state systems should be encouraged, and not dealt another, national blow. All of us, no doubt, ought to dedicate more of our resources of money, time and talent to the high goals of education, but we should struggle harder to free the finding and spending of those resources from external dictation, however inadvertent, benign, and impersonal the dictator may be. The wall of separation between coercion and education constantly needs strengthening.

LIVING ON THE HEIGHTS

MY BROOKLYN HEIGHTS neighbor, Truman Capote, has an article on the Heights in the current issue of *Holiday*. I turned to it eagerly, for ever since we moved there from a Long Island suburb, less than two years ago, I have devoured everything I could find about our new neighborhood. Living there has been an exultant experience for me, and I have waited for a gifted writer to tell me why this was so. Truman Capote in his *Holiday* piece has poetically captured the spirit of the place.

Although the charm of Brooklyn Heights has captivated most of us who have settled there, I realize that it would not be to everyone's taste. If you dote on dream houses with roses 'round the door, read no further. Or if you are the kind of person who likes to visit New York but you wouldn't want to live there, our neighborhood would not be for you. For even though, as Truman Capote says, Brooklyn Heights is an oasis in the "greenless grime-grey" of contemporary Brooklyn, it too is uncompromisingly urban.

The saving grace of Brooklyn Heights is that the old neighborhood, thanks to the few stalwart families who refuse to leave it during its dark day of decline, and the new young families who are earnestly restoring its respectability, is trying to live by the urban code of an earlier day. The families who are buying up and rehabilitating its sturdy brownstones, graceful colonials, and Federal style manses, are making a brave effort to keep alive the idea of the city as a place where one can lead a healthy, normal life—where children can grow up in safety and decency and where city-family amenities and traditions can be carried out with grace and dignity. They are trying to restore a way of life that has almost been forgotten.

Whether the new Brooklyn Heights will succeed, no one can say. Perhaps, as some of the sociologists tell us, the cities are just hopeless, fit habitations only for the unmarried, the footloose, the lonely aged, and the childless. The only families who will remain in the city, they tell us, are those who are trapped there—underprivileged, over-crowded slum dwellers, whose children dream of deliverance and eventual escape to the suburbs. But those who in recent years have found Brooklyn Heights, like those who never left it, are willing to attempt this one last valiant effort to make a go of worthy family living in the city. If they fail, there is not much hope to be found elsewhere.

When we moved to the Heights from a very satisfactory suburb, we were always embarrassed by the inevitable "But why, why?" It clearly was not financial reverses; we moved into a house roomier and more solidly constructed than the one we left. But what else

could it be? Only a mad eccentricity on the part of the head of the household seemed to be an adequate explanation for many of those who heard we were "going back to the city," though it was a city we had never lived in before.

I must admit that for some time I felt guilty about the move. To take six children and plant them in Brooklyn when they could be living in the suburbs—I asked myself, was it only because I was tired of the commuting grind? Purely selfish? I am still not sure.

But it appears to have worked out well. My wife swears she is contented with our new home, and we can all see that she has been relieved of some suburban burdens that for years were readily taken for granted. The children have adjusted with remarkable ease; it seems to me that they now live calmer, more family-centered lives—as Capote says: "A good place to raise children, this neighborhood where the traffic is cautious, and the air has clarity, a seaside tartness. . . ." With time-consuming commuting eliminated we spend more time together than we used to do. And because the walls of the old houses that line our streets were built by men who believed in privacy—"walls thick as buffalo, immune to the mightiest cold, the meanest heat," is the way Capote describes them—we can be wholly cut off from the city outside our door.

But to have the city outside the door after the seven-year stretch in the suburbs—that delights me.

On an impulse I can walk over to the esplanade and watch the lighted ferries crossing from Manhattan to Staten Island, can see the lamp held by the Statue of Liberty twinkling in the distance, can look at the lights of lower Manhattan skyscrapers, shining over the water like a great marquee advertising the city, or watch the traffic flowing across Brooklyn Bridge.

I like to walk down the quiet city streets of the Heights and watch people arriving for an elegant dinner party at the fashionable homes, or a block away witness two neighbors, one white, one colored, arguing about Kennedy's chances. I like to be able to walk out of the house and buy cigarettes at two o'clock in the morning if I need them then. I like to get the first edition of the *Times* when it hits the newsstands, and get home from the theater by midnight. I like living in a neighborhood where races, nationalities and social classes are gloriously jumbled, as they are in the Heights.

I am, I must confess it, hopelessly in love with Brooklyn Heights. Now that Truman Capote has confessed that he feels the same way, by some odd extravagance of lovely logic, there seems little reason for me to be shy about it any longer.

JOHN COGLEY.

Christ and the Universe

by DOROTHY POULAIN

HALFWAY BETWEEN St. Lô and Coutances is the Château de Cerisy, with its old moat and huge walls. Here Madame Heurgon, daughter of the late Paul Desjardins, has succeeded in reviving the celebrated "Décades" of the Abbaye de Pontigny, inaugurated by her father between the two world wars. It was her idea that in 1958 one be dedicated to "La Pensée de Pierre Teilhard de Chardin."

This was the first time since 1955, when the great Jesuit paleontologist had his "changement d'état," as he referred to death, that a group of scientists, philosophers and theologians gathered in a symposium to discuss the many aspects of his rich and complex thought. The significance of the occasion was not lost on those informed of the event (which, designedly, received no publicity), and it brought eager response from the far-away Ivory Coast, from Algeria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Italy and Spain. In all, the participants numbered about forty.

The Décade was presided over by Madame Jacques Madaule, who is writing a thesis on Teilhard. Her charm, competence and devotion became apparent at once and never failed her during our stay.

It had been decided, judiciously, to present the man, the thinker, before his thought; and for this purpose several of Teilhard's intimates had come to give their personal testimony. The first of these was Mademoiselle Teilhard-Chambon, his cousin, who transported us to the world of Teilhard's childhood. We saw the ancestral home, a *gentilhommière* in the Auvergne, where Pierre was born on May 1, 1881. Then we learned of his devout mother, to whom he was deeply attached, and who was, incidentally, the great grand-daughter of a niece of Voltaire! And we heard odd, surprising things; for example, as a very small boy Teilhard developed a passion for the *hardest* objects he could find. These were usually pieces of iron picked up in the countryside, one of his most treasured possessions being an old horse-shoe. This odd taste was the child's attempt, apparently, to associate the Absolute with something tangible, durable, imperishable.

Dorothy Poulain writes frequently on French religious and intellectual questions.

After a happy home life he entered the Jesuit novitiate at eighteen. Later, as a stretcher-bearer in the trenches of World War I, he was humbly to refuse honors or promotions that were his due. Phase followed phase in his extraordinary career till it ended as he—predestined priest of the Resurrection—always hoped it would, on a joyous Easter Sunday.

THE PROGRAM proper began with the scientists. Among them were Dr. Paul Chauchard, the neurophysiologist, Assistant Director of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, author of *La Foi du Savant Chrétien*, *La Création Evolutive* and many other works; the Jesuit, Père François Russo, who commented on a number of Teilhard's unpublished texts and stressed the point that Research is Evolution's present spearhead; the paleontologists, Dr. Crisafont Pairó (Teilhard's ardent champion in Spain), and Professor Piveteau of the Sorbonne (for whom Teilhard is one of the greatest minds that ever was) who read a paper on Anthropogenesis.

There was presented then, in a magnificent panorama, a vision of the past on this lonely earth before man came, the millions of years when matter was being vitalized and its more complex forms, which were destined to cradle the coming humanity, emerged gropingly, awkwardly, and perfected their ultimate pattern.

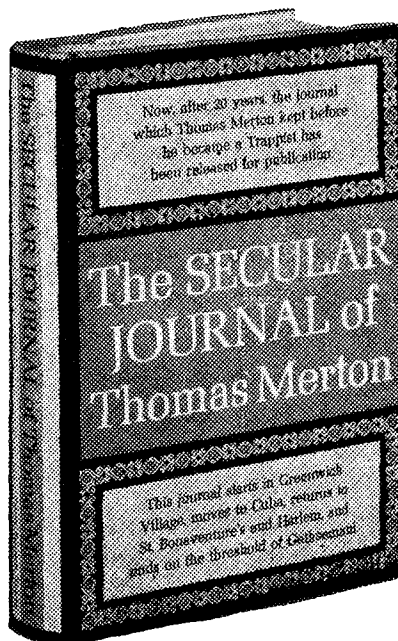
There were usually two sessions a day, followed by discussion periods which became increasingly animated as the philosophers entered the arena. Père d'Armagnac, S.J., effected the transition with a paper on the Philosophy of Nature in which he made clear that in the creative action of God there is both mechanism and finality—the one horizontal, acting on the early stages of the universe, the other vertical, revealing man in whom self-consciousness is the absolutely new element.

It became increasingly evident as the speakers succeeded each other that Teilhard's thought is both rational and supra-rational. His intention was to respond dialectically to the anguish of the modern world and to a humanism closed in on itself (Marxism, Existentialism). Though himself a Doctor of

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Theology, he abandoned the Scholastic vocabulary in order to make himself more accessible to the man of today, and this greatly disturbed his critics of the more classic tradition. Nevertheless, the unsuspected number of persons brought into or back into the Church because of Teilhard's sympathetic understanding of their difficulties and his success in dissipating them would seem to speak for his more novel approach.

The problem of the *future* of man holds a very important place in Teilhard ("le Passé m'a révélé l'Avenir") and it is precisely this part of his work which has received the most criticism. Among the motives which explain the emphasis on the future is the recognition of a biological humanity; man is born not only as an individual, but as a species. It is in the noosphere, the "thinking envelope," that the individual solutions are contained.

WITH PÈRE Wildiers, the Franciscan from Antwerp, the discussion entered the realm of the theologians; with Père de Lubac we left it, as he brought the *Décade* to a close with a superb paper on *Le Milieu Divin*. It is in this work that suffering, the problem of evil and the purifying "passivities" are dealt with rather than in *Le Phénomène Humain*, which was written in a scientific discipline and was never intended to be taken by itself as an explanation of the world. But this is not the only cause of the too common misinterpretation of Père Teilhard's thinking. Basically, the chief cause of this confusion is the fatal hostility of those who, unable to perceive what is the essential question at a given moment of the world's history, see no reason why the question should be posed.

During the presentation of Christogenesis we were made aware of the fact that up to now and in spite of the dominant place St. Paul gives to it, the third activity of Christ (difficult to classify as human or divine, but "cosmic") has hardly attracted the attention of the faithful or the theologians. But with the universe expanding fantastically before our eyes the time has come for Christianity to arouse itself to a distinct consciousness of what the dogma of the universality of Christ, transposed to these new dimensions, creates in the way of hopes, and at the same time of difficulties.

Hopes, because if the universe is so formidably vast and powerful, then thinking of Christ demands a frame of reference far more vast than that to which we have been accustomed. Difficulties, because if the new space-time concept demands this expansion of Christ, how can this come about without the loss of the adorable personality or the risk of seeing it volatilized? And here Teilhard finds the astonishing and liberating harmony between a religion of the Christic type and an

Evolution that is convergent. Were the world a static cosmos, relations of a conceptual or juridical order could be invoked to establish the primacy of Christ over Creation—Christ the King—because He has been so declared and not because any *organic* relation of dependence could conceivably exist between Him and the fundamental irreducible multiplicity.

THE CENTRAL place this idea holds for Teilhard is found in a letter of capital importance written by him from Capetown, October 12, 1951, to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. It was read to us at Cerisy by Père Leroy, the biologist, as part of his personal testimony. With permission, I am using it here to conclude this brief account of the *Décade*:

"Very Reverend Father: On the point of leaving Africa (after two months of work and calm in the field), it seems that this is a propitious moment to let you know in a few words what is in my mind and how things are going with me.

"1) First of all I think you will have to be resigned to taking me as I am—that is to say, with the congenital quality (or weakness) which accounts for the fact that since childhood my spiritual life has never ceased being completely dominated by a sort of profound sentiment of the organic reality of the

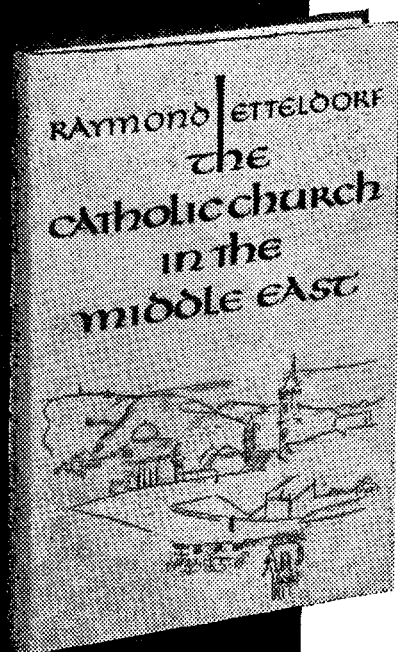
World; a sentiment at first rather vague in my mind and heart, but gradually becoming with the years a precise and invading sense of a general convergence of the Universe on itself, this convergence coinciding and culminating at its peak with the One *in quo monia constant* that the Society has taught me to love.

"In the awareness of this movement and this synthesis of everything in *Xristo Jesu* I have found an extraordinary and inexhaustible source of inner light and strength, and an atmosphere outside of which it has become impossible for me to breathe, adore, believe. That which in my attitude for the past thirty years could be taken for stubbornness or impertinence is merely the result of my being unable to prevent my wonderment from manifesting itself.

"This, psychologically, is the basic situation from which everything derives, and that I can no more change than the numbers of my years or the color of my eyes.

"2) With that made clear, and to reassure you on my inner position, I must insist on the fact that whether or not it is the case with others the inner attitude I have just described has the direct effect of binding me with increasing inevitability to three convictions which form the very marrow of Christianity:

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verging cluster of human activities; and lastly, the essential perfecting function assumed by the risen Christ in the center and at the summit of Creation. These three elements have grown and continue to grow roots so deep and so interwoven in the entire system of my intellectual and religious vision that it would be impossible henceforth for me to uproot them without destroying everything.

"Truly, and by virtue of the whole structure of my thought, I feel myself today more irretrievably bound to the hierarchical Church and to the Christ of the Gospels than I have ever been at any moment of my life. Never has Christ seemed more real to me, more personal, more immense.

"How can anyone believe that the direction I have taken is a wrong one?

"3) There remains the fact, and I acknowledge it fully, that Rome can have its reasons for considering that, in its actual form, my vision of Christianity is premature or incomplete and that as a consequence it cannot be diffused at present without objections.

"It is on this important point of outer fidelity and docility that I want particularly (in fact that is the essential purpose of this letter) to assure you that in spite of certain appearances I am determined to remain 'an obedient child.'

"Obviously, I cannot, without risk of an inner catastrophe and of being unfaithful to my most cherished vocation, cease from my own seeking. But for several months I have no longer been concerned with the propagation but rather with the *approfondissement* of my ideas. An attitude greatly facilitated for me by the fact that I can once again do scientific work.

"These lines to my way of thinking are, I repeat, a simple laying bare of my conscience, and they await no answer from you. Try to see in them nothing but the proof that you can count on me entirely to work for the Kingdom of God which is the only thing I see and that interests me over and beyond the realm of Science.

Very respectfully your son in Christ,
P. Teilhard de Chardin."

On returning home I reread *Le Christique*, Teilhard's spiritual testament written a month before his death. In a poignant passage he writes:

"How does it happen that, looking around me and still under the spell of what has become visible to me, I find myself practically alone of my kind? The only one to have *seen*? . . . incapable, therefore, when questioned, of citing a single author, a single piece of writing where, clearly expressed, one can recognize the marvelous 'Diaphaneity' which for me has transfigured everything?"

The eternal drama of the spiritual pioneer. One day may there be found place in our litanies for a special "Prayer for Precursors."

THE STAGE

CUI BONO

MR. ALEC COPPEL'S "The Gazebo," a comic melodrama of amiable negligibility, and "Third Best Sport," the negligible amiability with which Miss Celeste Holm is afflicted, are facts to which the critic turns in bleak anxiety. They, their sisters and their cousins and their aunts, seem permanently to inhabit the eye of his mind, and when they make, season after season, their cyclic return, it is only as one of nature's rhythms, of which it would be impertinent to ask: *cui bono*?

All hearts are in all proper places. The authors of "Third Best Sport" are unalterably opposed to organization men, though their intolerance does not extend to organization farce. Mr. Coppel even plays slyly with a vagrant intimation of murder-as-morality, until the box-office growls, and he scampers back to propriety through the loopholes of his plot. Miss Holm and Mr. Walter Slezak are shining morning faces: how she might glow in Arden; what banked fires might he bring to the flinty, Ibsenite North. But that they should come to this? It is the cause, my soul, it is the cause!

Of rich and lustrous texture, on the contrary, are Sir

John Gielgud's tapestry of Shakespearean eloquence, and, of mastering potency, Mr. John Osborne's "Epitaph for George Dillon:" both events exacting the further labor of tribute and attention.

At City Center, Miss Lotte Lenya, as guest artist with the New York City Ballet, is offering three last performances of that most remarkable stylistic artifice of contemporary theater, "The Seven Deadly Sins."

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

WAR IS MANY THINGS

THE CYCLE of war films continues with a generous quota of imports, most of which are more concerned with factual stories and off-beat episodes than with the main battle. The most inspiring of these is "Nine Lives," which tells the intensely exciting story of Jan Baalsrud, a Norwegian underground fighter, the only one to escape from an unsuccessful sabotage mission in 1943. The rest of the film concentrates on his flight across Nazi-occupied Norway, a flight that is filled with almost unbearable hardships and privations, and becomes in this simple and beautifully-made

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picture, a hymn to man's will to survive. Although the Germans are always in hot pursuit, "Nine Lives" is not primarily a war movie. The enemy gives point and purpose to the flight through torturous mountains, icy fjords and bleak, frozen wastes on the way to Sweden, but nature is also an enemy: the dreadful cold, the blinding snow and the cruel ice.

No doubt much of the effectiveness of "Nine Lives" as a film is due to its complete lack of ostentation. Although the picture has stunning black-and-white shots of Norway's magnificent scenery, Director Arne Skouen never lets us forget Baalsrud the man in his fight against snow and ice and sub-zero temperatures; and the script Skouen wrote (from David Howarth's factual book on Jan Baalsrud, *We Die Alone*) is equally simple and unpretentious—with an emphasis on visuals that are so dramatic they hardly need the English sub-titles or the occasional narration that accompanies the Norwegian dialogue. In only a few episodes recounting Baalsrud's grueling experiences does the film sink to melodrama, and even then the good cast, by underplaying, succeed in giving the tense story a documentary air. Jack Fjeldstad plays the lead role extremely well; equally good are the other players who portray the various Norwegians who help, guide and even carry the half-frozen, toeless hero to safety. Fortunately, the grim story is relieved from time to time with humor. And, perhaps because "Nine Lives" never preaches, it is all the more effective as a tribute to man's courage and dignity.

NATURE IS also to be reckoned with in "The Silent Enemy"—nature and the Italians. This English film, adapted from Marshall Pugh's book, *Commander Crabb*, tells the story of the now famous Lionel Crabb when he was a young lieutenant and was sent to Gibraltar in 1941 to help combat Italian frogmen who were attaching explosives below the waterline to British ships at anchor. It took an unorthodox officer like Crabb, who was also an expert in mine and bomb disposal, to handle this problem which was proving a serious menace to the British in the Mediterranean; and the film, well directed by William Fairchild, who also wrote the script, never depreciates the enemy. The members of the Italian Tenth Flotilla Unit are shown as brave underwater men and skillful divers; and it is only toward the end of this long movie that the English are able to catch up with them and put them out of business. The problem is heightened by the fact that the Italians use a merchant ship in neutral Spain as their base of operations, but Crabb (Laurence Harvey) and one of his boys (Michael Craig) take care of this obstacle in good commando fashion and the Allied Convoy is saved. In spite of its length and occasional Roverboyish playfulness, "The Silent Enemy" is interesting, and its underwater scenes are first-rate.

ALSO BASED on fact is another English film: "I Was Monty's Double" which tells the story of the deception used by the British to fool the Germans into thinking that the Allied invasion in 1944 might start from North Africa. Although the film moves very slowly at first and is too detailed in setting the stage for the hoax, it is tremendously exciting once it gets going. The actor M.E. Clifton James, who impersonated General Montgomery and who wrote the book on which the movie is based, plays himself; and it is no surprise of course that he looks so much like Montgomery or plays the role so well. And John Mills and Cecil Parker are excellent as members of the British Secret Service who thought up and executed (with the cooperation of James) the clever trick. The scenes showing the actor being trained for the biggest role of his career are fascinating; and the execution of the plot, with James-as-Montgomery in Gibraltar and then making an inspection tour of North Africa, are packed with suspense. The cloak-and-dagger episodes by no means detract from the picture's documentary atmosphere.

IMPERSONATION, although fictional this time, is also the concern of "The Last Blitzkrieg," which tells the story of a group of Germans who are trained to impersonate American G.I.'s and then commit acts

of sabotage and other demoralizing "incidents" during the German breakthrough in the winter of 1944. Filmed on location in Holland, the picture is interesting enough, but not particularly startling. Van Johnson plays the role of the good German well; and he and his fellow-saboteurs are quite effective in throwing monkey wrenches during the American retreat. Outsmarting him and his pals finally are Dick York, Larry Storch and others as Americans who get wise to the deception. "The Last Blitzkrieg" is a minor item in the growing number of movies that set out to show that there were, even during the war, some good Nazis.

ALTHOUGH not particularly concerned with war, "The Perfect Furlough" is concerned with service men, especially a group of them at a polar Army base where morale is low. A Pentagon psychologist (Janet Leigh) cooks up a scheme to give one of them a perfect furlough in Paris—which should satisfy the others vicariously. So Tony Curtis is flown to Paris, and when the M.P.'s stop him from dating an Argentine Bombshell (Linda Cristal) he gets involved with the psychologist herself. Contrived and rather unfunny, "The Perfect Furlough" becomes a slapstick bedroom farce and is about as perfectly tasteless as "Tunnel of Love" and "Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys."

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OF NOTE

AUTHENTIC DIALOGUE

THE MOST RECENT issue of the quarterly *Philosophy Today* (Saint Charles Seminary, Carthage, Ohio; \$4 a year) includes several articles on "Man and his Neighbor," from the book *L'Homme et son Prochain*, published by the Presses Universitaires de France, and originally given at the eighth congress of the Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française in Toulouse. The following excerpt is from the article "Authentic Dialogue," by Marcel Deschoux.

Far from being the exception, misunderstanding is part and parcel of our daily living. It feeds upon every opposition, differences of sex, age, social environment and profession, differences in character, in our manner of existing, thinking, in the way we see our own selves, the world and others. Alain spoke of the "agreement about the disagreement." And an understanding over terms and the real nature of a conflict already has something about peace and freedom about it. The very possibility of a solution—and of peace—demands the clarification and removal of all misunderstanding.

There is only one way to overcome misunderstanding. The different points of view must be brought face to face for the very purpose of reconciliation. Such an approach must characterize every discussion. Unfortunately, experience shows that discussions do not always shed light on problems. Often they degenerate to where the deaf are talking to the deaf and in the end only perpetuate and aggravate misunderstanding. . . .

Ultimately all difficulties boil down to this: each one comes to a discussion "with his guns loaded." We naturally believe—perhaps too much so—that experience is on our side. We ask others to open their eyes to "things as they are." We claim to "let the facts speak for themselves." However, such claims are very unhappy ones, according to the pointed remark of Henri Poincaré: "the unfortunate thing is that facts themselves just never speak." And we all are anxious enough to take advantage of this situation and speak for them. It hardly occurs to us that our neighbor might possess the truth and we be in error. Rather we come to a discussion with a prepared statement. Our partner need only study its terms, capitulate and sign his name. Such an approach simply rules out any true dialogue.

At the beginning all evidence is personal. To call upon "the facts" is to deceive yourself as well as others. And to look for support to reason or logic does not change the situation. Logic depends upon fundamental postulates. But it is just these fundamental positions, quite personal, that are at stake in a dia-

logue. We are inclined to think that once these fundamental positions are defined there is agreement on all that should follow logically from them. But this is an illusion. A definition can express or confirm an agreement already reached on the level of vital understanding. However, it cannot command such an agreement. No intellectual technic or logical device can substitute for "creative understanding" (Keyserling). This is the fruit of the living logic of dialogue, something other than the mathematical mind.

We must guard ourselves continually against these two pitfalls, from a simplicity and naiveté that would identify our own cause with Experience or Reason. . . . We simply want to impose our convictions upon others. It has not always been the least tyranny that has justified itself with Reason and History. Their use has only one meaning—to disqualify the other person. And this is *the* obstacle of all discussion. And should it show up as polemic, then war is substituted for dialogue. The relation of the speakers is seen in terms of opposing theses. The gain of one can be nothing but the loss of the other. Self-love comes to life. Rivalry overrides any concern for truth. The only thing that matters is to attack and defend oneself. And to accomplish this anything goes: smug statements, pretended indignations, mockery, shrugging of the shoulders, irony, play on words, intended ambiguity and all such things. Every-

one comes away from this sort of thing convinced that he has settled things with his adversary. We even glory in the fact that we have reduced to silence someone with whom we set out to have a discussion.

When the battle is over we must admit, if we are sincere, that what we considered forceful arguments were really more force than arguments. . . . We try to arrange things, to show some sign of reconciliation. We will no longer crush our adversary but rather tolerate him. We back down and begin to devise an acceptable compromise *within* the limits of the initial pretensions of both parties. Craftiness takes the place of the original violence. War gives way to a kind of resigned peace. But no one forgets that he made a concession only because there was nothing else to do. . . .

"Peace is not the absence of war," Spinoza wrote, "it is a virtue springing from the depths of the soul." It is this virtue, the spirit of peace, that is the condition for any authentic dialogue. In any true dialogue there is no question of subjecting someone to ourselves, nor of calculating mutual concessions. War, attack, violence and diplomacy just have no place here. The true spirit of dialogue is rather like the attitude of a child toward its parents, the disciple toward the master (spiritual dependence), of the believer toward God. It is both living and spiritual. The essential thing is to accept

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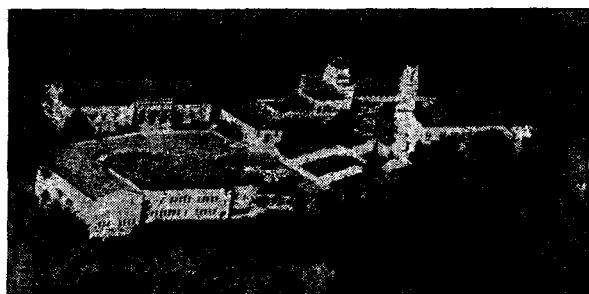
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fully the presence of someone else and to open ourselves to his influence.

What makes a dialogue is reciprocal presence and actions based on recognized equality. And in both the action and the presence there is a kind of mutual involvement. Authentic presence of one person to another brings with it a mutual modification in the depths of each one. And an agreement that is true "communion" is no longer within the limits of initial pretensions but *beyond* the limited and incomplete notions of each one.

Dialogue is related to propaganda as love is to rape. Everything depends on how we approach someone and influence him. For any authentic dialogue there is, first of all, a work to be done within ourselves. We must *accept* the presence of another, the necessity of this presence. We must desire this presence, be willing to go out into something that is simply different from ourselves. The "we" must *give*. We must give confidence, show a willingness to meet others and want a greater awareness of self and others. Human respect must go and all paralyzing personal attachments. Only after all this is there room for Truth, that "third member" of true dialogue (Emerson). And the "self" and the "other" find their fulfillment by losing themselves in truth. The other is no longer a stranger to us. To open myself to his influence is simply to be myself. All the rich expectations of unity belong to whoever understands just how deeply others are involved in his own personal fulfillment.

COMMUNICATIONS

THE BEAT GENERATION

Philadelphia, Pa.

TO THE EDITORS: In his article on the Beat Generation literature [Dec. 2] Mr. Krim dealt only with method, and not the meaning or basic pre-

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mise of the content of Jack Kerouac's writing, which, in itself, is the more important factor.

I can also find value in this writer's methodology (Don't punctuate, a conclusion may be reached), but it is nothing more than a contemporary form of the "stream-of-consciousness" school. In fact, this present off-shoot can be called a "stream-of-booze-and-sex" type of literature. But still, the most important question is, why?

In essence, what Kerouac is saying is, "This is not only the way I live, this is what I live for." He, and others that follow his pattern, live for and on pleasure, because that is the life root of their present existence. And their present existence is their entire life. There is no past. . . . Why look back? There is no future, or at least nothing tangible that can be planned, since man's whole future is insecure. The present is where man should exist; why think about tomorrow when it may never arrive? Get what you can here and now.

The writers of this type of literature all cry and shout (a great deal of the time in four-letter words) that this is not their world; they did not make it, and they will not accept responsibility for its actions. . . .

I sense, though, a feeling of guilt and anxiety in the diatribes of this group against our mass culture. They seem to be afraid to join the culture mass, because, in doing so, they must accept the responsibilities for its

failures—or successes. They would quite readily accept the latter, but in doing so they know they would have to be answerable for the former. . . .

So to avoid failure, and its subsequent emotional and spiritual reactions, these individuals avoid everything that has to do with the mainstream of our society. In this way they avoid the jeers, rebuffs and emotional and physical traumas that sometimes occur to individuals who try and offer some answers to our myriad problems. . . .

DONALD H. OWEN.

"CERTAIN POEMS"

Notre Dame, Ind.

TO THE EDITORS: It is unfortunate that The Commonweal allowed its columns to Mr. O'Gorman's attack on John Edward Hardy's *Certain Poems* [Dec. 19], especially in view of the intellectual ground he seems to have chosen for conducting it. I say seems to have chosen; for it is difficult to make out an intellectual ground beneath this litter of vague self-contradiction, as when for example he reproaches Mr. Hardy on the one hand with being too concerned with his vision at the expense of his language, and on the other with an "insistence on circumlocution, on the studied phrase that in the end undermines the vision and the poem."

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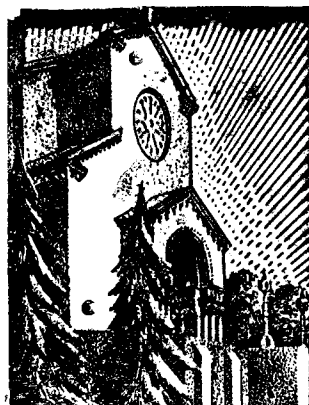
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Mr. O'Gorman appears not to grasp one subtle point in the dialectic of vision and language, that we must begin with the language and penetrate it to the vision or risk criticizing a poet's language if it does not express a vision which may after all be our own vision and not the poet's—our criticism may be *short-sighted!* He objects, without explaining why, to the phrase "her motion's seeming"; but the phrase means, as the narrator says even more explicitly a few lines later, that the girl in the window appears from her motions to be undressing in front of a mirror which is hidden from view. The phrase understood, what objection can there be? Of the sonnet he quotes entire, he says the last two lines, with their allusion to the madness of Orestes in *Iphigeneia in Taurus*, elude him, and in his gloss on the rest we note in particular a failure to grasp the multiple meanings of the conceit of carpentry in the octave. Why is the device of extended and complex metaphor "simply poetic?" (though from the viewpoint of Mr. O'Gorman's explication it is certainly "another way" of saying something else!)

No, it is absurd to speak of an intellectual ground accompanying Mr. O'Gorman's thin pipings, these woodnotes wild; but there is a burden of attitude which can be defined. The distaste he exhibits for intricacies of language that reflect an intricate and shadowy world implies a kind of enthusiasm, as Msgr. Knox would call it, a valuing of immediate illumination over the Christian tradition. The obscurities of which he complains result, in the parts of Mr. Hardy's volume that can be called religious poetry, from the use of techniques and topics also to be found in Merino and Herbert and indeed Prudentius and St. Augustine; who writes simply of the vision of simplicity other than perhaps Kilmer or Tabb? In common with the Christian tradition in poetry Mr. Hardy writes of the mystery of meaning in existence, and not the pure vision of Being, which is ineffable. Simplicity in this fallen world carries no conviction, and whereof man cannot speak, there must he remain silent.

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Meditation and Commentary of a Christian Poet

A POET BEFORE THE CROSS. By Paul Claudel. Translated by Wallace Fowlie. Regnery. \$6.50.

By PHILIP DEASY

"FOR MANY years now, O Lord, each day at five o'clock in the afternoon, I have been the client of Your blessed cross. A disappointing client. The air which this sluggish character displaces when he moves would not be enough to turn the sails of a windmill. It doesn't matter. He likes to be here, he likes to feel totally dissolved and ignored here, to accept his part of silence and general immobility. Most of the time, nothing happens, at least nothing perceptible. He is happy when, after long repeated periods of watching, he feels deep within himself something as important as the falling of a grain of sand. But is it nothing just purely and simply to exist? Is it nothing just to coexist with that lamp, with that tiny particle of red light which at times diminishes and at other times abruptly flashes out, as it testifies to God over yonder in the sanctuary? . . . It is You, O Lord, and it is the cross!"

So opens Part Three of *A Poet Before the Cross*, which, though it comes near the end of the book, might well serve as the most fitting overture to the heart and spirit of M. Claudel's contemplation. *A Poet Before the Cross* is a prose work begun in April, 1933, at about the time M. Claudel was finishing his assignment as French Ambassador to the United States, and completed two years later when he had fully retired from diplomatic service. As Thomas Merton noted recently in the pages of *The Commonweal*, "Christ on the Cross is the fount of all art because He is the Word, the fount of all grace and wisdom." *A Poet Before the Cross* is another. Christian poet's testament to the truth of that insight.

The subject of M. Claudel's book is precisely what the title indicates. "A poet and a believer,"

as he calls himself, meditates (Part One) on the events from Palm Sunday to the Crucifixion, and then (Part Two) on The Seven Last Words. Part Three is entitled "Prayers" to which is added an Appendix of twelve pages. In the course of his contemplations, M. Claudel modestly refers to himself as a "stammering amateur exegete." If an amateur he is surely one in the strictly etymological sense. "Stammering" he most certainly isn't. "Volatile" would be a more accurate word. In some parts of the book he is almost torrentially so. But it is a volatility of dramatic force and impact. M. Claudel writes as a man aroused and insistent.

This is not to imply, however, that there are no reading difficulties.

What M. Claudel says of that "essential flower of the Gospels, the quadruple story of the Passion" might be applied to his own exegetical approach: "The special style" comes "not in a naively chronological sense but . . . through a system apparently illogical in allusions, shadings and assortments, side connections, in sudden flashes, in anastomosis and splices comparable to the most delicate anatomical drawings." *A Poet Before the Cross*, that is to say, as a book of meditation and commentary constantly calling upon the reader's own powers of rumination, is not a book to be read hurriedly and at one sitting.

The range and aptness of M. Claudel's "complex arsenal of Bib-

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lical reference" (the latter Mr. Fowlie's phrase) is amazing. As one example, take his commentary on "The Sixth Word" ("It is achieved"), which covers eleven pages, contains quotations from Genesis, Leviticus, Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Kings, from the Book of Proverbs, Job, Exodus, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, Zacharias, the Gospels of St. John and St. Matthew, the Apocalypse and St. Paul to the Corinthians, the Romans and the Ephesians. As for that "ingeniousness in bringing to *The Word of God* reinforcements and favorable resonances" (another of the qualifications M. Claudel demands of the Biblical exegete) one might note, among other examples hardly less striking, how the Genesis story of Joseph and his brethren is woven into the commentary on the first of The Seven Last Words, and the story of Absalom into the meditation on "The Descent from the Cross."

For the theologically unskilled general reader who at the same time may have no direct knowledge of M. Claudel's poetry and dramas, Wallace Fowlie's introduction to *A Poet Before the Cross* is everything that could be desired. Mr. Fowlie only hints at what must have been formidable translation difficulties. How well he surmounted those may perhaps, be indicated by the opening quotation of this review.

A Precise Talent

THE VOYEUR. By Alain Robbe-Grillet. Translated by Richard Howard. Grove Press. \$1.75.

By ROBERT GUTWILLIG

THIS IS AN infuriating book. Robbe-Grillet appears to be possessed of and by a very precise, if very limited, talent. Clearly, this is a man who knows very definitely what it is he wants to say and show, and one ultimately admits that he succeeds brilliantly, even totally, in saying everything he has to say and showing everything he has to show. This, in itself, is exciting and surely

unusual. But is it all worth doing in the first place, I kept wondering? And my answer was a hesitant "no."

The external action of *The Voyeur* seems simple and clear enough at first. Mathias, a traveling wrist-watch salesman, returns for one day (a Tuesday) to the island of his birth. He hopes to sell all eighty-nine watches in his suitcase and leave when the boat returns to the mainland at 4:15 that afternoon. Although he rents a bicycle and covers almost the entire island, Mathias sells only a few watches. Moreover, he apparently rapes and kills a thirteen-year-old girl on an isolated cliff between the hours of eleven and noon, and then just misses the boat when his bicycle breaks down. While waiting for the Friday afternoon boat, Mathias becomes more and more agitated, faints once, is confronted by a young boy who seems to know that he is the murderer, refuses a ride Thursday on a fishing boat, tries to sell a few more watches Friday morning and, unapprehended, leaves the island that afternoon.

Well, that's all simple enough. But the difficulty and, admittedly, some of the irritated interest come when the reader soon discovers that, although the action is described in the third person singular (Mathias did this or he thought that), everything is going on in the

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character's mind. In short, there is no external action; it is all interior. The author manages this effect through the use and overuse of a number of deceptively simple devices. Time is fractured so often that time past and time future are presented together in time present, which is both precise and indefinite (I shall not belabor the reader with the obvious implications of the title or of a watch salesman wandering about literally not knowing what time it is).

A number of objects—a blue cigarette wrapper, a piece of string, a bag of jelly beans, a newspaper clipping of a rape and murder—and a particular pose, hands clasped behind the waist, constantly recur. The objects seem to be "real" enough and the pose held by several "real" girls and a girl in a movie advertisement is certainly "realistic" enough, but the deliberate insistence and repetition brings with it an aura of the fictitious. Finally, the seemingly endless and precise description of everything seen is maddening, deliberately maddening. The following passage was chosen at random:

"The stone rim—an oblique, sharp edge formed by two intersecting perpendicular planes; the vertical embankment perpendicular to the quay and the ramp leading to the top of the pier—was continued along its upper side at the top of the pier by a horizontal line extending straight toward the quay."

It is these persistent, unremitting geometrical progressions that eventually convince one that M. Robbe-Grillet intends Mathias to be quite, quite mad. Of course, by this time the reader, or this reader anyway, has become quite, quite mad himself. *The Voyeur* more than amply illustrates Yvor Winters' fallacy of imitative form: that is, for the writer to depict boredom he must bore his audience, to show drabness he must utterly depress the reader, to render madness he must drive us mad.

All this the author intends, apparently, for, as the jacket copy indicates, Robbe-Grillet has a theory of fiction: "that the surface of things is more meaningful than the

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depth of human beings." No wonder none of the characters in *The Voyager* ever comes alive, no wonder we are never really engaged with Mathias in his desperate madness. We do not care enough because M. Robbe-Grillet does not care enough.

Novel of Craft

CONFESSIONS OF A MASK. By Yukio Mishima. New Directions. \$3.75.

By CHARLES A. MONAGHAN

THE JAPANESE writer Yukio Mishima is a worthy practitioner of the craft of the novel, and when he uses a sensitive young homosexual to narrate *Confessions of a Mask*, he makes the most of it. He delicately scrutinizes the effect of unlawful passion on the narrator, and poignantly dramatizes the conflict between the attraction of normal conduct and the demands of perversion.

Mr. Mishima's narrator, Kochan, sees his homosexuality as a predestined lot. "Ever since childhood," he says, "my ideas concerning existence have never deviated from the Augustinian theory of predestination." Thus he dwells not at all on the causes of his inversion, but investigates the passion itself.

He tells of his early homoerotic experiences (the first is at the precocious age of four), his childhood loves, and his attempts to convince himself, during adolescence, that he actually is sexually normal. This attempt is tested as Kochan becomes involved in a platonic love affair with the sister of a friend. But the affair fails because Kochan can feel no desire for the girl. "Can there be," he asks, "such a thing as love that has no basis whatsoever in sexual desire? Isn't that a clear and obvious absurdity?"

Mr. Mishima's most brilliant writing of the book is in the section where he describes the unhappy love affair, as Kochan's attempt to overcome his lot is cast against the background of the humiliating last days of Japan in the second world war.

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But it is the description of a defeated and broken Japan that makes for the best writing, not Kochan's tragic situation. This is the one, and a serious, flaw in the book. Kochan is too much the invert. The book becomes at times a sexual *Sorrows of Young Werther*, with an author, however, not sufficiently removed from his material.

The reader somehow wishes that Mr. Mishima would have used his considerable talents to show the interrelation between the individual and Japanese society, rather than have focused so intently on Kochan himself. Mr. Mishima's object, however, is smaller, and he accomplishes it well.

Aspects of Love

ASK ME NO MORE. By Pamela Frankau. Harper. \$3.95.

By ANNE FREMANTLE

AMONG the extant truly workmanlike, professional novelists in any language, Pamela Frankau ranks high. She is essentially a maker—not a prophet, like Kafka, nor man-made-river, like Joyce, nor a moral force, like Henry James, nor a creator of forms, like Virginia Woolf. She is simply a maker of well-made novels, whom to read is to experience something of the same pleasure in good craftsmanship as one feels when watching center-court tennis at Wimbledon, or a boat well-handled in a stiff breeze.

Miss Frankau published her first novel when she was nineteen. It was *The Marriage of Harlequin*, a zestful, romantic, Michael-Arlenish job, and since then she has written steadily—more than a dozen novels, and a study of Jezebel. With each book her competence has grown, her technique has improved, until in the last five—*The Willow Cabin*, *To the Moment of Triumph*, *A Wreath for the Enemy*, *The Bridge*, and *Ask Me No More*—she has achieved a choreographer's mastery over many characters and a depth-analyst's profound knowledge of each one.

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The Bridge was an "agonizing re-appraisal" of his life by one David Neilson, who had to move "by backward steps" through his life, to face the hurt he had done three people who most loved him: his mother, his wife and his daughter. This novel is seen steadily from one point of view, David's, whereas in *Ask Me No More* Miss Frankau sees love and life from a woman's angle, that of Alex, her vicarage-raised heroine. Alex too has to face tests of love, and she, like David, fails them. But she does not wholly fail, for, as St. John put it, "we have believed in love," and where Alex loves, with more than the body, she learns to wear the "intolerable shirt of flame" and to prove with her whole self how right Mr. T. S. Eliot is to observe that "We only live, only aspire, consumed by either fire or fire."

Alex's bourgeois virtues are in glaring contrast to the frivolities of Geoffroy Bliss, a king of drawing-room comedy, a playboy magician, who is as congenitally unable to tell the truth as Alex is to lie. He needs Alex, though, as anchor and altitude meter. *Ask Me No More* opens in the twenties, when Alex has been Geoffroy's mistress for five years; when it ends, in the fifties, she has briefly been his son's, and both father and son are dead, very similarly murdered, both by ex-mistresses, and both while they were performing corporal acts of mercy. Both father and son have, humanly speaking, failed in every relationship and on every occasion, yet they die, ironically, for love.

Miss Frankau is particularly clever with her supporting cast, the minor characters with whom most novelists don't bother much. She rounds and fleshes them all: the female novelist, with her craggy lover; Perdita's effeminate husband; Alex's saintly father and martyr-complexed brother; Ludo's half-brother Sir Joolian; Alex's grouchy maid. Even the walk-on parts are plums.

Yet perhaps that is why, though she is a good novelist, Miss Frankau is not a great one. Because her characters all perform so admirably, not enough effort is required from the reader: he is not forced to par-

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ticipate in the passion; he is invited to watch the play. Perhaps there is such a thing as having the cast too perfectly under control, so that no one character can break through, tear and take over.

Miss Frankau's conversation-carry-all, her dialogue that not only short-cuts the showing of character but bears them and the plot along, is consistently brilliant: she has an unerring ear. Not only for the whine, the malaise, the social inferiority or aggressiveness, but also for the unexpected, yet inevitable, give-away. And her climate, her mood-setting, is excellent. War-time Washington, or blacked-out London; an air-liner above the Atlantic or the beat-generation's slang, she knows them all.

She most skillfully conceals, too, her large intent of charity. All her novels are about love—as novels should be, but they are also about Love, as human beings must be. Yet she never lets her slip show—there are not two lines of preaching in all her output.

Miss Frankau seems serenely to have been preserved from the convert's itch to paint in a self-portrait of the artist among the kneeling crowd; to scribble in some place a neat little signature "yours faithfully, God"; to ex-cathedraize some minor or major character. Her profound Catholicism suffuses her writing, but it is the light by which she sees, not a specially colored ink she uses. Her characters sin and suffer, and even sometimes achieve sanctity, but her tidiness is so artful that her reader is never aware *how* the truth is flooding in. But he knows *that* it comes in, nor by eastern windows only, and that her whole land is bright.

REVIEWERS

Philip Deasy is on the faculty of St. Peter's College in New Jersey.

Robert Gutwillig is now in Europe where he is completing his second novel.

Charles A. Monaghan is on the administrative staff of New York University.

Anne Fremantle, a regular contributor, is well known as a lecturer, critic and reviewer.



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